OPEN PEER REVIEW

The Impact of Restorative Justice Programs on Preventing Child Victimization in Iranian and English Law

Marjan. Shahrabadi[1], Majid. Shayganfard[1*], Mohsen. Lal Alizadeh[2], Farhad. Shahideh[1]

[1] Department of Criminal Law and Criminology, Ma.C., Islamic Azad University, Mashhad, Iran
[2] Assistant Professor, Department of Law, Payame Noor University, Tehran, Iran

*** Corresponding author email address**: drshayganfard@mshdiau.ac.ir

Received: 2026-04-08 **Revised:** 2026-09-12 **Accepted:** 2026-09-19 **Published:** 2026-09-01

EDITOR:
Ghasem Eftekhari
Associate Professor, Department of Political Science, University of Tehran, Tehran, Iran. Email: eftekhari@ut.ac.ir
REVIEWER 1:
Agwu Sunday Okoro
Lecturer & Clinical Law Administrator at Baze University Abuja, Abuja, Nigeria. Email: agwuokoro@gmail.com
REVIEWER 2:
Mohammadbagher. Jafari
Department of Sociology of Culture, Istanbul, Türkiye. Email: mbjafari@kmanresce.ca

1. Round 1

1.1. Reviewer 1

Reviewer:

The paragraph beginning “Howard Zehr, emphasizing the function of restorative justice, defines it as follows” relies on a well-known conceptualization of restorative justice but cites a secondary Persian source rather than Zehr’s original work. Since the manuscript is intended as a scholarly comparative legal study, the authors should, where possible, cite the primary theoretical source for foundational definitions. If the reference list is intentionally restricted, the text should at minimum clarify that Zehr’s definition is being reported through a secondary source. More generally, direct quotations attributed to major restorative justice theorists should be verified against the original wording to avoid conceptual or translational distortion.

The paragraph beginning “Restorative justice is a form of justice in criminal matters that is based on ‘reparation’” introduces Marshall’s approach but does not provide a source directly corresponding to Marshall. This creates a citation-attribution problem. The manuscript should distinguish between ideas directly advanced by the cited source and ideas attributed to another scholar through that source. The authors should either add the original Marshall reference to the bibliography or explicitly indicate that the discussion of Marshall is based on the interpretation presented by Gholami. This is particularly important because the paragraph makes several substantive claims regarding the priority of reparation and the possible inclusion of counseling, treatment, and education within reparative measures.

In the paragraph introducing Susan Sharpe’s “five characteristics” of restorative justice, the manuscript presents an extensive conceptual framework without a citation directly attached to the initial attribution. The subsequent five paragraphs should be supported by the appropriate original or authoritative secondary source. More importantly, the authors should explain why Sharpe’s five-part model is analytically relevant to child victimization. At present, the five characteristics are described generally, but the connection to children is postponed until later sections. A more rigorous theoretical structure would explicitly

demonstrate how participation, repair, accountability, relational restoration, and community strengthening operate differently when the victim is a child.

A similar inconsistency appears in the subsection "Proposal and Acceptance of Restorative Measures," where the manuscript states that restorative measures may include "an apology by the child to the victim, financial compensation, or participation in social activities such as community service." This formulation clearly treats the child as the offender. It is incompatible with a section presented as discussing the protection of child victims. The authors should either relocate this material into a clearly identified subsection on juvenile offenders or revise the analysis so that the child remains the victim and the restorative obligations are imposed upon the offender. This distinction is fundamental and should be corrected throughout the manuscript.

Authors revised the manuscript and uploaded the document.

1.2. Reviewer 2

Reviewer:

In the paragraph beginning "This perspective confirms that monopolization of the administration of justice by professionals has contributed to 'social alienation' from legal norms," the manuscript moves from Braithwaite's theoretical position to a strong causal conclusion. The assertion that professional monopolization of justice "has contributed to social alienation" requires either empirical support or more cautious language. The authors should distinguish Braithwaite's normative argument from an empirically demonstrated causal relationship. In addition, the concept of "reintegrative shaming" should be defined more precisely, particularly because its application to cases involving children requires safeguards against stigmatization, humiliation, coercion, and psychological harm.

In the section "The Position of Restorative Justice in Addressing Child Victimization," the manuscript repeatedly describes restorative justice as a "complementary mechanism alongside traditional criminal justice," but it does not explain whether the legal systems of Iran and England formally recognize restorative practices as diversion, pre-trial intervention, post-conviction intervention, sentencing-related measures, or informal community mechanisms. The authors should develop a legal-institutional typology showing at which procedural stage restorative justice can operate in each jurisdiction. Without this distinction, the comparative analysis remains too general to demonstrate actual differences between the two legal systems.

The paragraph beginning "In cases involving child victimization, the importance of restorative justice is even greater" appropriately emphasizes the particular vulnerability of children but requires a clearer differentiation between child victims and child offenders. Throughout the manuscript, these categories are occasionally conflated. For example, this paragraph begins with child victimization but subsequently discusses offender accountability in general terms, while later sections explicitly address "child offenders." The authors should systematically distinguish restorative justice involving a child victim from restorative justice involving a child offender, because the ethical safeguards, procedural objectives, consent requirements, and risk assessments differ substantially between these situations.

In the paragraph stating that "numerous studies have demonstrated that restorative justice can play an effective role in reducing recidivism," the manuscript needs greater analytical precision. Recidivism concerns offender behavior and is not equivalent to prevention of child victimization. The authors should explain the causal or conceptual pathway through which reduced recidivism contributes specifically to preventing child revictimization. They should also distinguish offender-centered outcomes, such as lower reoffending, from victim-centered outcomes, such as reduced trauma, increased procedural satisfaction, restored sense of safety, and reduced secondary victimization. These outcome domains should not be treated as interchangeable indicators of restorative justice effectiveness.

In the paragraph on mediation beginning "One of the most important instruments of restorative justice is mediation," the article should discuss contraindications and eligibility criteria more explicitly. Direct or indirect victim-offender mediation is not appropriate in every case involving a child, particularly where there are substantial power imbalances, sexual abuse, domestic violence, coercive control, ongoing dependency, intimidation, or a significant risk of retraumatization. The manuscript currently presents mediation primarily in positive terms. A scientifically balanced analysis should identify

circumstances in which restorative participation should be excluded, delayed, modified, or conducted through shuttle mediation or representatives rather than face-to-face contact.

The section entitled “The Effectiveness of Restorative Justice in Improving the Circumstances of Child Victims” consists of only one relatively short paragraph, despite addressing one of the article’s central claims. The sentence “Research indicates that this approach can reduce children’s anxiety and fear, improve their family and social relationships, and increase their self-confidence” requires specific evidentiary support and should be substantially expanded. The authors should distinguish psychological outcomes, social outcomes, justice-related outcomes, and reoffending-related outcomes and critically evaluate the quality of evidence supporting each. This section should also acknowledge that positive effects may depend on voluntariness, mediator competence, offense type, preparation, family involvement, and post-conference support.

The subsection “Stages of Implementing Restorative Justice for Children in Iran” contains a significant conceptual inconsistency. The paragraph beginning “The first stage in the restorative justice process for children is the assessment and identification of the offense” subsequently refers to identifying “the underlying reasons for the child’s conduct” and whether “the child requires therapeutic, counseling, or rehabilitative assistance,” which clearly frames the child as an offender rather than a victim. Because the article’s stated subject is child victimization, the authors must clarify whether this subsection addresses child offenders, child victims, or cases in which children may occupy both positions. If the study concerns child victims, the assessment stage should instead focus on victim safety, trauma, developmental capacity, voluntariness, risk of retraumatization, support needs, and suitability for restorative participation.

Authors revised the manuscript and uploaded the document.

2. Revised

Editor’s decision: Accepted.

Editor in Chief’s decision: Accepted.